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In teaching English as a foreign language overseas, the teacher is often more successful than the teacher of English as a second language in the United States. Required to be constantly alert so that cultural assumptions in the teaching materials are not slighted, he must present all levels of speech and leave nothing about the language and culture to chance. The teacher who never leaves his home country encounters much the same situation and problems of adjustment when working with students from another cultural background. He must function in a new cultural situation without the recognition overseas life forces on one's awareness of the cultural differences. The program in Foreign Language Education at the University of Texas has been arranging workshops in Bilingualism and the Teaching of English as a Second Language for teachers in the school system of Texas, and has instituted cultural sensitivity training as a regular workshop feature. The workshop format includes: (1) an anthropological presentation and discussion of cultural differences; (2) a second language situation in which the teacher fills out a standard job application form in an unknown language; (3) a technical explanation of the unknown language; (4) small group discussions of teaching approaches; and (5) technical content and cultural sensitivity sessions. (AMM)

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Cultural Sensitivity Training for the Teacher of Spanish Speaking Children

For some years now teachers have used the techniques developed for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language with varying degrees of success and with varying degrees of acceptance. When the teacher has been enthusiastic about the method, the students have usually responded rather well. Yet in more than half of all programs which have attempted to use this method, results have been mediocre or, at best, of no better than average quality. This method has apparently been less successful in the United States, its home ground, than in various foreign countries abroad. Although one can assert that no one is accepted as a prophet at home, the question arises as to why the overseas situation should be a more fertile ground than the country of development.

I would like to suggest that one of the reasons is the unfamiliarity of the overseas environment. Its foreignness contributes to the successful application of the rules and principles on which the methodology is based. Generally most programs of English as a Foreign Language conducted abroad use native speakers of English for the requirements of daily classroom teaching. These teachers are aware of the differences between the place of their assignment and their home in the United States. They know that students do not have the opportunity to practice their English outside the classroom. The pressures the student encounters outside the school are sufficiently intense so that he is unlikely to use English for more than a small fraction of afterschool time. Teachers who work in such

situations are always aware that the achievement of the student is very largely due to how well the classroom hour is structured and to how significantly the lesson content has been ordered for the appropriate presentation of the most necessary topics. Student progress is a direct result of the amount of material presented during study hours and subsequent practice time. Such factors as student motivation, external and internal school pressures, cultural differences and material control are more clearly seen when placed against a different cultural background. The teacher though perhaps a master of the classroom situation is not a master of the non-school situation. What is more, the teacher is not even a member of the surrounding culture and is only a temporary resident who will ultimately return to the original home situation in his native country. The attitudes of the people he meets, the food he eats, the dress, the gestural patterns, the landscape and climate, even the language he hears outside the school every day serve as a constant reminder of the differences between the cultural settings of his temporary overseas home and his own native land. He is indeed teaching English as a foreign language and must make every effort to break through the different cultural assumptions and understandings his students hold in order to present his material with maximum effectiveness.

As a result, the teacher is required to be constantly alert so that the cultural assumptions are not slighted, all levels of speech are presented and that nothing about the language and culture he is teaching is left to chance. The overseas placement requires the teacher to be oriented toward precise

specific goals to a considerable degree. This awareness is not immediate nor does it always occur. Some teachers never achieve the understanding necessary to be effective in such a situation. All teachers, the successful and the not so successful, go through a stage of adaptation to their surroundings. They must learn new attitudes, new customs, and new standards which are functional for their students.

The teacher, though aware of the differences, usually has difficulty in adapting: The old cues are no longer valid in this new atmosphere but they are still the ones which elicit his reactions to the environment. The good old days back home suddenly become golden days when everything went well and one did not have to make constant adjustments. All the problems magically disappear and all the successes are magnified. The local situation seems intolerable - the food is too spicy, the climate is bad, the student is undependable or downright hostile, the reactions of administrators are horribly bureaucratic, nothing works and life is completely miserable.

After a while, the situation improves and some awareness of the differences become apparent. The teacher begins to recognize the contrasts between home and the local scene. The students begin to study and even learn something once in a while. Still feeling somewhat superior to the local situation and not really a part of it, the teacher begins to laughat some of the problems and begins to accept some of the ~~problems~~ them as burdens which must be endured but which are not as intolerable as once thought. Ultimately, the teacher adapts to the new situation and functions normally once again. The new attitude is that while this is not Paradise

at least the situation is no longer the Inferno it once was.

The teacher who never leaves his home country encounters much the same situation and problems of adjustment when working with students from another cultural background. I recall my shock when I first arrived in Texas and encountered the culture of the South West- it seemed quite irrational. People seemed to be very friendly and polite but they would never keep their appointments when made far in advance. Students could not be counted on to do anything. Absence for illness I had expected but absence because someone's mother had a dentist's appointment seemed unbelievable. And the food was nothing but chili peppers abundantly covered with beans. Even Christmas was unusual - firecrackers exploded under my window and rockets were sent up at night. A church festival had been changed into a patriotic extravaganza. Ultimately I adapted and last Christmas here in Chicago seemed quite colorless without the fireworks. The period of adaptation was extended and the problem obscured because I was still home. I had not left the United States and the old cues for personal interrelationships seemed to remain valid. And they were, so long as I watched television, read the newspapers or communicated with administrators. Adjustment was complicated because we shared the same general standards but had separate individual standards.

Most teachers who work with students from minority cultural groups have the same difficulty - they are functioning in a new cultural situation without the recognition overseas life forces on one's awareness of the cultural differences. The old values seem to still be appropriate but the answers do not solve the problems.

In many cases the answers only serve to intensify the difficulties which exist. The teacher apparently still in the same environment is responding properly; the student responding otherwise must be doing something wrong. When a problem occurs the tacit assumption is that the student is at fault because he is ignoring all of the appropriate responses. This assumtion that our way is the natural way and that if a difference exists between us, the other person is wrong is one of the major reasons we have difficulty with the new situation. There is little awareness that teaching a non-English speaking student in the United States requires the same adaptation required for overseas teaching. While we recognize the validity of the teaching technique on an intellectual basis we are unable emotionally to implement all those other factors which make the techniques a success overseas. There is a general lack of cultural sensitivity. Our responses tend to remain conditioned by our original cultural insights which are part of our scholastic and academic background.

For some time, our program in Foreign Language Education at the University of Texas has been arranging workshops in Bilingualism and the Teaching of English as a Second language for teachers in the school system of Texas. Last summer a large group of teachers (approximately 200) was asked to identify problem areas in the teaching of minority culture students. These were all experienced teachers with an average teaching experience in service of five years. They listed several items: 1. Lack of pride in scholastic work; 2. Lack of personal and classroom discipline; 3. No planning for the future ;

4. Indifference to scholastic requirements; 5. No desire to read; 6. Over concern with status; 7. Distrust of people outside the family or the community; 8. Disregard for property; etc. These items are identical to those problems associated with foreign teaching situations. The cultural conflicts are the same whether encountered in the United States or abroad.

In an attempt to solve some of these problems and especially to improve the teacher's awareness, Cultural sensitivity training has been instituted as a regular feature of Teacher's workshops presented during the course of the year. These workshops are not meant to solve all of the problems which might face a teacher nor are they meant to provide complete presciptions for some of the difficulties which occur. Our efforts have been directed toward an introduction to several areas in which teaching effectiveness might be improved through cultural awareness.

Among the areas stressed, several concerned with specific cultural attitudes have appeared to be the most significant. The first is the general assumption that our own way of doing things is the natural way. It is probably universal to assume that others want the same things and think the same way we do. Here we attempt the solution of a problem in terms of the particular environment in which the problem occurs rather than in terms of familiar programs or standard blueprint solutions . The goal is to make obvious such differences in values, motivation and perception which may be the cause of difficulty. It is useful to think that such values reside within the individual but they may also be viewed as part of the social structure in which the

individual moves. The expectations of others, the system of rewards and punishments, the ultimate attitudes expected of the individual are societal values rather than internal individualistic values. An individual may be willing to accept many changes but may not be willing to act accordingly because the group pressures on him will discourage such action. These values are there for teacher and student alike and the lack of awareness causes numerous problems when each expects the other to act in the same fashion each expects of himself. Personal and group awareness is emphasized in our attempt to make overt these various attitudes.

A second area is that of personal success. We tend to tie our self esteem to personal success and our desire to improve ourselves. We attempt to improve the lot of the Latin-American and this is considered a good thing in our culture. We also attempt to ignore social distinctions. When we begin to look at these problems, we are confronted by a conflict between Morality which insists that all men are to be treated equally and our personal success factor which says we must ignore class distinctions in our efforts to get ahead. Since most Latin-Americans are in the lower economic class, in the South West we are faced with a consideration of two problems, one of which is not held to be a proper area of inquiry.

A third area is Materialism. We seek tangible results that can be measured or counted. Many groups seek satisfaction in aesthetic or spiritual values. Our delight is gadgetry and we tend to judge on the basis of plumbing or the quality of the grass on someone's front lawn. As a result we tend to stress control,

progress and material values. The Hippy violates the first, the radical threatens the second and the poor man affronts the third. A person from another culture with long hair, no money and with no concern for school is triply reprehensible.

A fourth area is our orientation toward time and our reliance on the value of science. We tend to treat time as a material thing that should be actively mastered or manipulated. We buy time and create time whenever possible. Our preciseness about time is a result of our attempt to manipulate it and put it to good use. Time IS money and if we lose time we lose money. We look on our manipulation of time as a duty and a responsibility which must be observed. Our scientific orientation requires us to focus on answers to particular problems. It implies that once a problem has been stated that there must be an answer to it. But the presence of a problem does not require that an answer exists for that problem. Given all the time and money we might wish, we may still be unable to contrive a solution. The best we can hope for is to bypass the problem by recognizing the limitations of the logic.

These areas are not the only ones which can be explored - inter personal behavior, moralistic orientation, attitudes toward authority and personal goals are others which add to our insight and contribute to an awareness of cultural differences. Not until the teacher is aware of such differences is it likely that meaningful work may be accomplished in the classroom. The teacher must go abroad, so to speak, to discover the attitudinal differences between his orientation and the students' expectations.

A workshop format which has been quite successful in the introduction and discussion of such matters is relatively easy to arrange. A general plan which I have followed is

1. An anthropological presentation and discussion of cultural differences;

2. A second language situation in which the teacher is required to fill out a standard job application form in an unknown language. Speakers of the second language are present who are willing to help in any way possible so long as communication is maintained within the unknown language;

3. A technical explanation of the unknown language which is quite irrelevant to the problem of filling out the form;

4. Small group sessions to discuss different approaches to language teaching;

5. Appropriate technical content sessions which are as practical as may be arranged;

6. Cultural sensitivity sessions in which the assumptions of both cultures are explored.

There has been fairly general acceptance by all participants of the goals of such workshops. While it is difficult to come up with extensive data detailing observable changes, the most apparent changes have been in the more successful use of English as a second language in the classroom and a readier acceptance of the cultural differences as expressed in student behavior.

I would like to summarize by telling a story: Once upon a time there was a great flood which swept a monkey down a torrent of water. The monkey being agile and skilled in climbing

managed to scramble up a tree. As he hung onto a branch panting from his narrow escape, he looked down and saw a fish being buffeted by the vigor of the current. With the very best intentions, the monkey reached down and saved the fish from the flood.

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